



RSO ADVISORY BULLETIN

09 December 2010

UNITED STATES EMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

SUBJECT: Preparing for the Holiday Season

As the holiday season approaches, regrettably we can also expect an increase in criminal activity, at the resorts, on crowded public streets, within the shopping centers and supermarkets. Many of these crimes can be prevented by being alert and taking a few of the following precautions:



Shop with friends or relatives if possible; there is safety in numbers.

As you shop, be alert in crowded places. Among pickpockets' favorites are jammed aisles, elevators, busy sidewalks and public transportation, especially at rush hour. Carry the day's most expensive purchases closest to your body, and don't carry so much you lose the ability to react quickly.



Shopping with Children. As any parent knows, shopping with a child, regardless of age, can be a real challenge, especially during the holiday season. Consider taking the nanny with you, so that someone will be dedicated to keeping a close eye on your child/children while you shop.

Other tips that you may want to consider:

1. Plan all shopping trips and if possible, break up major shopping events into smaller trips. Intersperse shopping with other errands or events that the child enjoys.
2. When feasible, consider taking your nanny with you, so that someone can be dedicated to keeping a close eye on your children while you shop; or allowing a child to bring a friend along on the trip can help occupy the child's time and make the trip more enjoyable for everyone. Ensure that your child and friend are not disruptive or present a discipline challenge. If you have to spend your time telling a child to behave, chances are, you will not be enjoying yourself.
3. Teach your children to go to a store clerk or security guard if they ever get separated from you in a store/mall, and be sure they know their first and last name so they can tell someone who they are. It's best to keep children under four (4) in a stroller. Children in shopping carts should be properly belted and seated in the child carrier area at all times —never let your child stand in or push a shopping cart.

The age of your child will make a big difference in your approach to shopping. Know your child's limitations before you set out. Ensure your child is aware of your rules for shopping.



Return to your vehicle periodically to check on it and reduce the amount you are carrying. Store packages in the trunk or, if your vehicle doesn't have one, out of plain view (*under your rear seat, etc*). When possible, have purchases delivered instead of taking them with you; many businesses offer free delivery during the holiday shopping season. Ask for an escort to your car if you feel nervous.



Return to the mall or store for assistance if you spot suspicious activity near your vehicle. Stay alert while loading items into or out of the vehicle or arranging cargo stowage. If someone approaches, and you feel threatened, get in and lock up until they leave the area; if they loiter, drive away.



Carry enough cash to make your purchases, in lieu of Credit or ATM Cards. Instead of carry large sums of money in your wallet, consider using money belts. Leave your ATM card at home in a safe location and If you need to use your credit card, make sure you keep a copy of all purchase receipts. If possible, check your bank account information for several days to make sure that someone had not made any unauthorized purchases.



Be observant. Avoid dark areas, short-cuts, cul-de-sacs, and suspicious persons. Stay near light and people.

Be prepared to flee potential problems. If apprehensive about any location for any reason, leave.

Confine your charitable giving to reputable established organizations, preferably those with a local branch.

If solicited by an individual for personal charity, don't give cash; offer to buy the individual food or drink or refer them to local assistance resources.

If solicited for an unfamiliar organized charity, ask for literature so you can make an informed decision about giving; any reputable organization will be glad to provide material or a website address where you can check them out.

